

If a fire should occur...

- CLOSE the doors to stop the spread of the fire
- SOUND the alarm, alert others to the danger
- GET OUT of the building
- NOTIFY the fire department

DO NOT go back into the building or try to save your stuff.

Clothes, books and papers can be replaced-

**YOU CAN'T!**

## **LIVING WITH FIRE**

A PROGRAM FOR CAMPUS AND STUDENT FIRE SAFETY

Living With Fire is a project to develop campus-oriented fire safety material. It is available through the U.S Fire Administration website at [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

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- American Cancer Society
- National Electrical Manufacturers Association
- National Fire Sprinkler Association
- NFPA International
- SimplexGrinnell
- United States Fire Administration
- University of Texas System

Living With Fire was developed by  
writer-tech.com, llc  
PO Box 1046  
Belchertown, MA 01007  
413-323-6002  
[info@writer-tech.com](mailto:info@writer-tech.com)  
[www.writer-tech.com](http://www.writer-tech.com)

## **INFO BULLETIN ON...**

# Fire Sprinklers

## **LIVING WITH FIRE**

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### **What is the truth about automatic fire sprinklers?**

**What are sprinklers?**...An automatic fire sprinkler system is one of the most effective methods of controlling or suppressing a fire.

Sprinkler systems are made up of a network of pipes in the walls and ceilings that have sprinkler heads providing protection to hallways, rooms, stairways and other areas of a building. In most systems, the pipes are always filled with water, under pressure and the system is ready to do its job of putting out a fire quickly!

Sometimes sprinklers are concealed behind small metal plates in the walls and ceiling. Even though you can't see the sprinkler head, they are still there and able to spray water on a fire.

**How do sprinklers work?**...Sprinklers are generally located at the ceiling level of a building. They are equipped with a fusible link that melts when the heat given off by a fire heats the sprinkler.

When the sprinkler opens, water flows out in a spray pattern. The sprinkler system is designed to flow a specific amount of water per square foot based on the type of hazard that it is protecting.

**How many sprinklers activate in a fire?**...Despite what many people think, generally only one or two sprinklers open up and flow water during a fire-all of them do not go off at once!

**How much water flows out of a sprinkler head?**...A single sprinkler head will generally flow about X gallons per minute. This is not very much at all when compared to a fire hose, which will flow 150 gallons a minute or more!

**How much water damage will a sprinkler head cause?**...Since the amount of water coming out of a sprinkler head is significantly less than that in a fire hose, the water damage will be considerably less.

After a fire is put out by a sprinkler head, there are often comments about "all of the water damage that the sprinkler caused." What people often don't realize is how much fire AND water damage there would be if the sprinkler head had not activated and controlled the fire!

**How effective are sprinklers?**...According to the NFPA, sprinklers typically reduce your chances of dying by one-half to two-thirds in any kind of property where they are used. NFPA reports that, in 1997 (the latest year that statistics are available), unfortunately sprinklers were present in only 28% of all dormitory fires.

**Can sprinklers be damaged?**...While sprinklers are very rugged devices, they should not be tampered with, misused or vandalized. For example, should not be hung from a sprinkler head by a coat hanger, for example, because the hanger may accidentally strike the fusible link element and cause the sprinkler head to open. In addition, if a sprinkler head is covered with clothing, this may reduce the heat getting to the sprinkler and delay its opening.

**My building is fireproof. Why do I need sprinklers?**...Often, it is not the building that burns in fatal fires, but the contents-furniture, clothing and other furnishings. A sprinkler system will stop the fire in its tracks before it has time to spread very far.

**We have smoke detectors in our building. Do we need sprinklers too?**...Smoke detectors provide an excellent method of detecting a fire early and warning everyone to get out. However, the fire still has to be put out, and quickly, before it can spread and put a lot of other people in danger. That is the job for sprinklers, which can react in seconds. It may take the fire department up to ten minutes, or more, until they are able to put water onto the fire.